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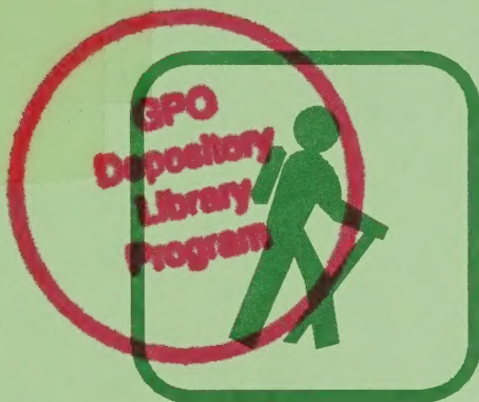
# SENECA CREEK BACKCOUNTRY

## HIKING GUIDE

SPRUCE KNOB—  
SENECA ROCKS  
NATIONAL  
RECREATION  
AREA

MONONGAHELA  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

UNITED  
STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
AGRICULTURE



AMERICA'S  
GREAT  
OUTDOORS







The **Spruce Knob Area** offers hikers a vast backcountry to explore. Nearly 70 miles of trails wind through stands of red spruce, open meadows and along fast-flowing mountain streams. Beautiful northern hardwood forests of maple, beech, birch, cherry and other trees cover most of the area creating a brilliant display of fall color. This area provides cool shade in the summer with many opportunities to see spring and summer wildflowers, birds and other wildlife.



**Seneca Creek Trail** is the most heavily used trail in the area. From Forest Road 112 it follows the creek for five miles before reaching its terminus with Horton Trail. Beyond this point, the trail is not maintained, but adventurous hikers can wander downstream a few more miles before reaching private property. This private land is posted, so please do not trespass. Seneca Creek has many waterfalls cascading into clear pools. The trail crisscrosses the creek several times. Hikers must ford the creek as there are no footbridges. **(5 miles)**

**Allegheny Mountain Trail** follows the ridge of Allegheny Mountain through hardwood forests and several small clearings. Beautiful views of the Seneca Creek drainage can be seen when the leaves are off the trees. Portions of this trail are occasionally used by authorized vehicles to access wildlife management plots and the gas pipeline crossing the northern end of the trail. For this reason, the trail is very wide for most of its length. **(12 miles)**

**Tom Lick Trail** connects Allegheny Mountain with Seneca Creek. This is an old road that passes through a large clearing maintained for wildlife habitat. **(1 mile)**

**Swallow Rock Trail** follows Swallow Rock Run up the west side of Allegheny Mountain and drops down the east side following an unnamed stream on its way to Seneca Creek. To reach the Seneca Creek Trail, hikers must ford the creek. The trail passes through an open forest of maple, birch, beech and cherry trees. **(3 miles)**

**North Prong Trail** follows the North Prong of Big Run connecting Allegheny Mountain Trail to Big Run Trail. Open meadows and beaver ponds are found along the way. **(3 miles)**

**Judy Springs Trail** connects Huckleberry Trail to Seneca Creek providing another route from the top of Spruce Mountain to the creek. The trail gets its name from a spring located at the western end that feeds Seneca Creek. For most of the way, the trail passes through an open meadow that was once used for grazing cattle. **(1 mile)**

**Bear Hunter Trail** departs from Seneca Creek just downstream from the Judy Springs bridge. This narrow footpath climbs to the top of Allegheny Mountain passing through a forest of cherry, maple and beech trees. **(1 mile)**

**Huckleberry Trail** connects Seneca Creek to the summit of Spruce Knob. The trail climbs 1,000 feet from Seneca Creek to the top of Spruce Mountain passing through hardwood forests and small clearings. Once on the ridge, the trail heads south for three miles before reaching the Spruce Knob Tower parking lot. Hiking along the ridge offers breathtaking vistas to the east and west. Blueberries, huckleberries and azaleas are abundant here. **(6 miles)**

**Lumberjack Trail** utilizes an old railroad grade left by turn of the century loggers. It traverses the side of Spruce Mountain remaining in the cover of birch, beech, maple and cherry stands. The old railroad grade has many seeps along the trail creating a marshy tread. Be prepared to get your feet muddy! This trail provides access to the remote High Meadow Trail. **(3 miles)**

**High Meadows Trail** connects Lumberjack and Huckleberry Trails. This is a beautiful trail that passes through several high meadows offering views of Allegheny Mountain to the west and Mt. Porte Crayon to the north. Because of its remote location, this trail does not receive much use. **(2 miles)**

**Big Run Trail** follows Big Run on what's left of a turn-of-the-century logging railroad grade. Big Run is a beautiful stream where beaver make their home. The trail climbs gradually up Allegheny Mountain and ends at the parking lot for the Allegheny Mountain Trailhead on Forest Road 112. **(3 miles)**

**Gatewood Trail** is a **2 mile** loop trail with several short, steep sections. It leads the hiker through a red pine plantation, northern hardwood forest, open pastures, and along the banks of Big Run where signs of beaver can be seen. Spruce Knob is visible from the pasture. This trail has two access points - one trailhead is located on Sawmill Run Road where the road crosses Big Run; the other trailhead is located on Forest Road 112 a quarter mile southwest of the intersection of Forest Road 112 and Forest Road 1. The trail can also be accessed by the Short Trail which begins across the road from the entrance to the Spruce Knob Lake Campground. The Short Trail is a **1/2 mile**.

**Whispering Spruce Trail** encircles the Spruce Knob tower. Visitors can feel what life is like for the plants and animals living above 4,000 feet in the Allegheny Mountains. This nature trail winds through windblown rock where one can feel the sharp west wind blow. It then leads out to a point where giant boulders are scattered through an open field. Exceptional views to the east and west are seen beyond. From this point the trail enters a thick spruce patch protected from the wind where visitors can peek through breaks in the trees to see the North Fork valley below and the mountains fading into Virginia. Beyond the stand of spruce, the trail forks; left leads back to the tower and right leads through a blueberry patch speckled with azalea bushes before reaching the parking lot. The wide hard gravelled path has gentle slopes. **(1/2 mile)**



**Spring Ridge Trail** is an old road that provides hikers a route from County Road 29 to Allegheny Mountain. The trail winds up the mountain through a hardwood forest where wildflowers are abundant in late spring and summer. **(3 miles)**

**Horton Trail** is named after a settlement along Gandy Creek north of Whitmer. This area was booming in the logging days of the early 1900's. Trails such as this one were the routes loggers followed over the mountains to get to work. Horton Trail follows Lower Two Spring Run up to the top of Allegheny Mountain. Trout can be seen in the stream. The trail crosses over Allegheny Mountain and descends steeply into Seneca Creek. Northern hardwood forests surround the trail. **(3 miles)**

**Bee Trail** is a footpath beginning at County Road 29 along Gandy Creek. The trail climbs 1,000 feet to the top of Leading Ridge following Bee Run most of the way through a forest of maple, cherry and hemlock trees. Bee Trail ends at its junction with the Leading Ridge Trail. **(2 miles)**

**Elza Trail** begins at County Road 29 along Gandy Creek upstream from Bee Trail. Elza is similar to Bee Trail in scenery, and it also climbs to the top of Leading Ridge. At this junction however, Elza Trail continues down the other side of the ridge to the North Prong of Big Run. **(2 miles)**

**Leading Ridge Trail** is a wide, grassy trail used periodically as a road to access some wildlife management areas. The trail leaves County Road 29 along Gandy Creek and follows Camp Seven Hollow up to Leading Ridge. Following the ridge to Allegheny Mountain, the trail passes through a few clearings that break up the hardwood forest cover. **(5 miles)**

## LEAVE NO TRACE!

- Make it hard for others to see and hear you.
- Bury all human waste at least 200 feet from water and trails.
- Select a campsite 200 feet from streams and trails.

## PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT!



Whispering Spruce Trail



Wild Azalea

### MULTIPLE USES

Visitors to the National Recreation Area are likely to see areas where the Monongahela National Forest is managing the forest's resources in a variety of ways. Small tracts of timber are cut, not only to provide hardwood lumber, but also to create openings to benefit wildlife and create vistas. Cattle, sheep and horses grazing on tracts leased to local farmers provide meat and wool and keep those areas open, preserving the open scenic qualities and grasses for wildlife. In other areas, hay or corn is grown on leased areas to preserve the rural agricultural landscape. Rangers at the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center or Petersburg Ranger Station would be pleased to explain any of these or other activities you see.

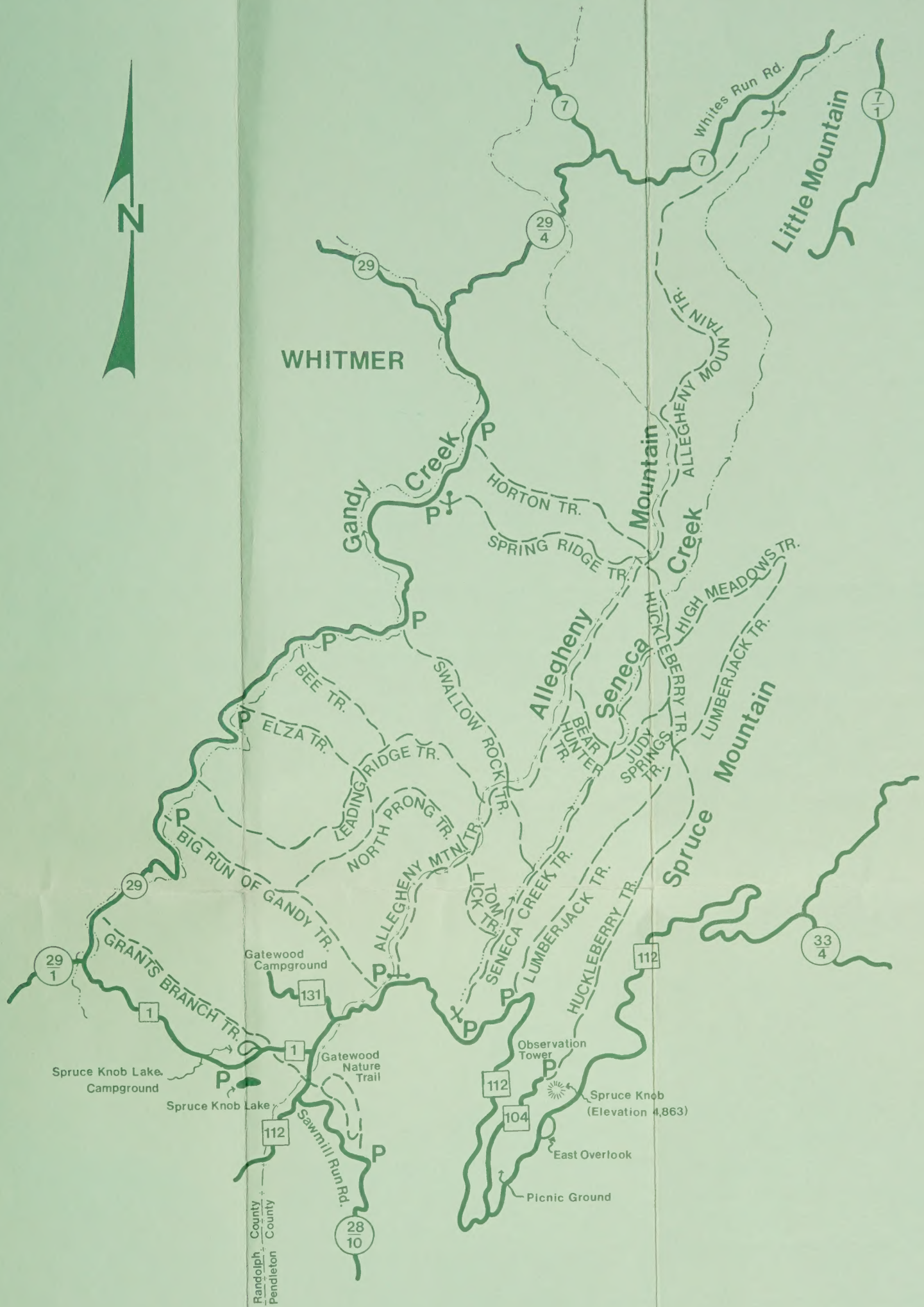
### HIKING HINTS

- Trails are marked with blue blazes
- Trails can be muddy in places so be prepared to get your feet wet.
- Dress for the weather. Be prepared for sudden changes.
- Wear proper footgear.
- Bring drinking water; otherwise, treat water from streams and springs before drinking to kill harmful pathogens.
- During hunting seasons, hikers are urged to wear high visibility clothing.
- Though mountain bikes and horses are allowed on all these trails, encounters with them are few and evidence of their use is rare.

This brochure is available in large print at the Potomac Ranger Station and Seneca Rocks Visitor Center.







## MAPS AND GUIDES

USGS Topographical Quads covering this area: Spruce Knob, Onego, Whitmer, Circleville and Snowy Mountain.

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide by Bruce Sundquist and Allen deHart, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Maps and guides are available for sale at the Potomac Ranger Station and the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center.



## WEATHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Spruce Knob Area ranges in elevation from 3,000 feet to over 4,800 feet above sea level. Freezing temperatures can occur any time of the year. Snow can be expected anytime from October through April. **All hikers should know the symptoms and treatment of hypothermia!** The Forest Roads are not maintained during the winter, so call the Ranger Station for weather and road conditions. The trailheads along Gandy Creek are the easiest to get to by car in the winter by following County Road 29 south from Whitmer.



## EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Ambulance/Rescue (Riverton)	567-2412
State Police (Elkins)	637-0200
State Police (Franklin)	358-2200
Randolph County Sheriff	636-2000
Pendleton County Sheriff	358-2214

Pay phones located in Whitmer, Riverton and Circleville.

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If you need more information,  
please contact:

Potomac Ranger District  
U.S. Forest Service  
Route 3, Box 240  
Petersburg, WV 26847  
Phone (304) 257-4488  
(weekdays only)

Seneca Rocks Visitor Center  
U.S. Forest Service  
P.O. Box 13  
Seneca Rocks, WV 26884  
Phone (304) 567-2827  
(daily, except winter)

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